

Film Review: Anna Paquin Makes Each Moment Count in ‘Margaret’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 7, 2011 - 4:06pm

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CHICAGO – The passion of adolescence, so driven by the emerging intellect merged with fierce hormonal obligations, is a subject tailor made for the movies. The drama and distinction in “Margaret” is the nearly perfect portrayal of the main character played by Anna Paquin, against the backdrop of New York City.



“Margaret” (the title refers to a significant poem in the film) is not shy about comparing the teenage circumstance to operatic tendencies – it even uses the New York Metropolitan Opera Company in climatic flourishes. Anna Paquin’s Lisa Cohen character is used as a metaphor for youth, in all its mistakes, awkward moments and left turns. But at the same time, it is a reminder of how youthful passion can get things done, and in effecting that change can produce valuable life experience. It seems we’ve all been in Lisa Cohen’s shoes – maybe not as extreme – at some point in our lives, and the decisions that were made associated with those moments in can eventually formulate the people we are today.

Anna Paquin’s Lisa is an upper middle class student, going to a private, high level high school in New York City. This is the type of school that promotes free and radical thinking, often in close quartered discussion groups. Lisa is very argumentative in those sessions, but isn’t above procuring answers for harder subjects like geometry, taught by Mr. Aaron (Matt Damon). She is living a carefree life in the Big Apple, until she participates in and witnesses a bus accident, which kills an unsuspecting female pedestrian named Monica (Allison Janney).

She has a hard time shaking the incident, even going to the memorial service, moderated by the victim’s best friend Emily (Jeannie Berlin). Lisa decides to do something about it, and enlists Emily in a lawsuit of the New York bus system. This pains her mother (J. Smith-Cameron), a notable Broadway actress, who is having problems of her own with a new lover (Jean Reno). In the chaotic weeks to follow, everything seems to be happening at once, which greatly alters Lisa’s isolated teenage universe.

“Margaret” continues its limited release in Chicago beginning October 7th. See local listings for theaters and show time. Featuring Anna Paquin, Matt Damon, Matthew Broderick, Mark Ruffalo, Jeannie Berlin, J. Smith-Cameron, Jean Reno, Kieran Culkin and Allison Janney. Written and directed by Kenneth Lonergan. Rated “R”

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Mother and Child: J. Smith Cameron as Mother Joan and Anna Paquin as Lisa in 'Margaret'
Photo credit: Fox Searchlight Pictures



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